

# ADOT seeks public input on plans for I-17

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What to do about Interstate 17?

That is the subject of a meeting Wednesday evening in Anthem to seek public comment on Arizona Department of Transportation plans for Interstate 17 - or alternative ways to get to Flagstaff.

Citizen input will focus on the "I-17 Alternatives Study" that the department already has begun. The study, along with public comment, is a preliminary assessment of the need for and feasibility of different transit routes north from Phoenix.

"This is a very preliminary planning study," said Doug Nintzel of ADOT. "We have an open mind on where this might lead us."

The meeting will be from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Wednesday at Boulder Creek High School, 40404 N. Gavilan Peak Parkway, Anthem.

Among the study's findings:

- Traffic along the freeway is more than it can handle, especially from the community of Anthem south.
- Use of the freeway will grow along with the population.
- Traffic eventually will exceed capacity outside of metropolitan Phoenix.
- Heavy truck use and mountainous terrain contribute to significant travel delays.
- Increased traffic causes more accidents, often forcing freeway closure and long, unpredictable delays.

The study concludes that the road's unreliability imposes significant costs on users, and that

no practical alternatives exist.

"One thing is for sure," Nintzel said. "An alternative is not going to happen overnight."

He said the department is not strictly limited to considering roadways. Rail also might be considered.

Nintzel said work already is under way on the freeway south of Black Canyon City, with additional lanes and access points aimed at reducing congestion.

But farther north, he points out, patterns of land ownership and difficult terrain are major factors that can limit freeway widening or, for that matter, alternative routes.